

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6513

As of February 1, 2016

Title: An act relating to reservations of water.

Brief Description: Concerning reservations of water.

Sponsors: Senators Warnick, Hobbs, Parlette, Takko, Hargrove and Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water & Rural Economic Development: 1/28/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: Approximately a year after a Washington State Supreme Court decision in 2013, the Department of Ecology (DOE) issued a letter notifying Chelan County that DOE would no longer issue permits that rely on water reserved by Washington Administrative Code (WAC) governing Water Resource Inventory Area 45 (WRIA 45). The reason stated is that DOE believes these permits would not provide uninterruptible water rights.

WRIA 45 includes territory in the Wenatchee River Basin.

In WRIA 45, DOE reserved water for new domestic, irrigation, and stock watering uses, well after instream flows were set that made no such provision. The legal authority DOE used to amend WRIA 45 to provide for these reservations of water was the legal theory of overriding consideration of the public interest. It is DOE's use of this legal principal that invalidated its reservations in the Skagit WRIA according to the 2013 Supreme Court decision. The setting of instream flows that include no reservations, prior to the amendment to make the reservations, are facts the Skagit Supreme Court case and the administrative history of WRIA 45 share.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed First Substitute): The Legislature declares its intent to authorize DOE to maintain and implement its current rule establishing reservations for WRIA

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

45. DOE must act on all water right applications relying on these reservations in WRIA 45 as the WAC governing WRIA 45 exists as of the effective date of the legislation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute: PRO: The local comprehensive watershed plan (Plan) work group was inclusive, collaborative and all agreed to the resulting Plan, including the instream flow subcommittee's recommendations. The Plan was implemented in 2008 all except the instream flows and reservations. The Plan has the safeguards and limitations that the 1983 act lacks. This hold-up means we cannot meet our GMA planning obligations. We have water right applications with no hope of action without this bill. A very expensive waste water treatment plant was built that now has no assurance of water. DOE spent \$2 million of state funds to implement this plan and had hoped to expand it. The bill is an important first step.

OTHER: While in favor of the concept, we had hoped for a state-wide solution.

Persons Testifying on First Substitute: PRO: Mike Kaputa, Chelan County Natural Resource Department; Commissioner Keith Goehner, Chelan County Commission; Mayor Jeff Gomes, City of Cashmere; Mayor Cheri Farivar, City of Leavenworth; Joel Walinski, City of Leavenworth; Gretchen Wearne, City of Leavenworth; David Christensen, Department of Ecology; Kathleen Collins, Wa Water Policyn Alliance;

OTHER: Bruce Wishart, Sierra Club/CELP.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Mark Peterson, Alpine Water District; Evan Sheffels, Wa Farm Bureau.